

REMARKS

Claims 1-13, 55, and 56 remain in this application.

Claims 1-13, 55 and 56 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 4,434,105 to Buysch et al. (Buysch) and Chem Systems "Developments in Dimethyl Carbonate Production Technologies" 99/00S6, May 2000 (Chem Systems) each taken alone, or in combination with each other.

Independent Claim 1, from which Claims 2-13 depend, and independent Claims 55 and 56 have been amended to further clarify that Applicants' recited process includes a first reaction zone and a second reaction zone. Support for these amendment may be found on page 9, lines 18-21, and page 10, lines 25-28. Furthermore, Independent Claims 1, 55 and 56 have been amended to further clarify that the crude cyclic carbonate stream utilized in step (a) has not been subjected to a separation other than to remove an amount of unreacted alkylene oxide, an amount of unreacted carbon dioxide, or both. Support for these amendments may be found at least on page 11, lines 8-11 of the application as filed.

However, contrary to Applicants' recited invention, Buysch is directed to a single reaction zone process followed by distillation (see Example 1). Buysch thus fails to disclose Applicants' recited limitation of a process comprising two reaction zones, wherein the product of the first reaction zone is utilized in the second reaction zone without purification, other than removal of starting materials.

Chem Systems is directed to a process to produce dimethyl carbonate via transesterification. At the second paragraph on page 33, Chem Systems discloses that "[i]n the case of DMC, the reactor is assumed to be a boiling pot, operating at 150°C, surmounted by a trayed or packed section from the top of which DMC is distilled as the methanol/DMC azeotrope." Chem Systems thus fails to disclose a process comprising two reaction zones, wherein the product of the first reaction zone is utilized in the second reaction zone without purification, other than removal of starting materials.

Accordingly, neither Buysch nor Chem Systems disclose all of the limitations recited in Claims 1, 55, and 56, as amended. As such, neither reference, alone or in combination may render Applicants' presently claimed invention obvious. Applicants therefore respectfully request the rejection be removed, and the Claims, as amended, be passed to allowance.

It is believed that the foregoing amendments and remarks fully comply with the Office Action and that Claims 1-13, 55, and 56, as amended herein should now be allowable

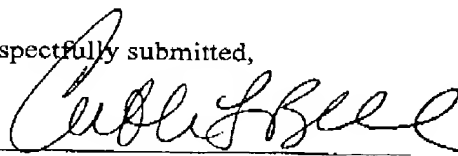
to Applicants. Accordingly, reconsideration and allowance is requested.

If there are any additional charges with respect to this Amendment or otherwise, please charge them to Deposit Account No. 1712 maintained by Assignee.

Date

March 5, 2004

Respectfully submitted,



Catherine L. Bell
Attorney for Applicants
Registration No.35, 444

ExxonMobil Chemical Company
Law Technology
P.O. Box 2149
Baytown, Texas 77522-2149
Phone: 281-834-5982
Fax: 281-834-2495